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# Organizing for change: North Tyneside Community Development Project and its legacy

Andrea Armstrong and Sarah Banks\*

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**Abstract** This article critically reviews the North Tyneside Community Development Project (CDP), which ran from 1972 to 1978 as part of a British anti-poverty experiment in twelve economically deprived areas. We draw on research undertaken by *Imagine North East* during 2013–2016, summarizing the CDP's work on industry/employment and housing, and discussing its distinctive features including: its ideology of 'radical reformism'; action-research on gender issues; pioneering work on play and youth; and published accounts of the process of local organizing and campaigning. We assess the project's legacies, including a six-volume final report, and enduring organizations and networks down to the present day. Despite subsequent regeneration initiatives, the former CDP area is the most deprived in the Borough, thus confirming the CDP's structural analysis of disadvantage and more recent critiques of area-based regeneration. In concluding, we examine the self-critical reflection in the final report that during its life, the CDP team struggled to balance local community work and wider structural issues affecting the industrial working class nationally and globally. We compare this with the struggle today for many local community organizations, which face being co-opted as welfare agencies dealing with individual crises in a climate of economic austerity and neo-liberal politics.

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## Introduction

North Tyneside was a 'third-wave' Community Development Project (CDP), officially running from October 1972 to September 1977, although some researchers remained until Easter 1978. It drew on the experience of the 'first-wave' projects such as Coventry (see [Carpenter and Kyneswood, 2017](#), this issue), and developed a close relationship with nearby Benwell CDP, initiated a few months earlier (see [Green, 2017](#), this issue). It followed a similar pattern to most other CDPs, undertaking work on housing, industry and employment, and advice and information. However, its distinctive features included work on gender and youth issues, including significant reports on women's work and youth unemployment ([North Tyneside CDP and North Tyneside Trades Council, 1977](#); [North Tyneside CDP, 1978e](#)) and innovative work on play and recreation. Furthermore, while categorized by [Kraushaar \(1982, p. 62\)](#) as one of the 'radical' CDPs, it defined itself in more nuanced ways as 'radical reformist'. It also paid more attention to documenting the process of its community action work than some other CDPs, while also generating hard-hitting research-based political analyses and contributing to major inter-project reports such as *The Costs of Industrial Change* and *Gilding the Ghetto*. Some critiques of CDPs (e.g. lack of attention to gender issues, and a focus on class politics at the expense of community development work), may be less true of this CDP than some others.

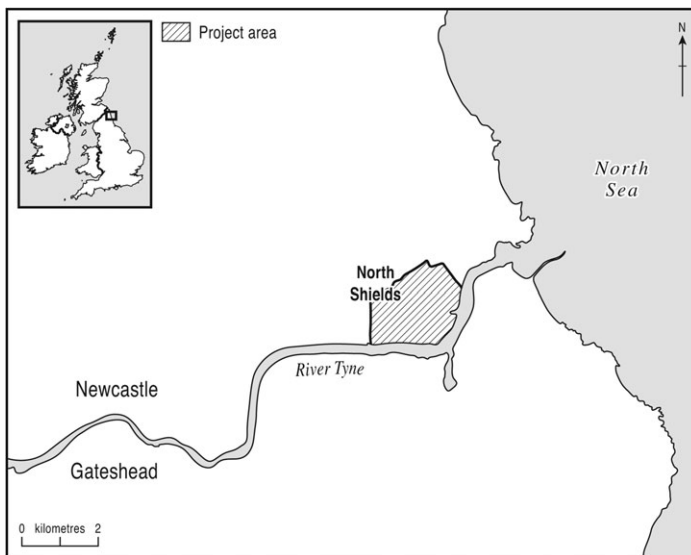
This article outlines the work of North Tyneside CDP, before discussing some legacies and significance for the present day. We draw on research undertaken during 2013–2016 for *Imagine North East*, which examined documentary evidence, including CDP reports, census data, Home Office and Cabinet Office records, unpublished local CDP papers and other grey literature (see [Armstrong and Banks, 2016](#)). We conducted thirty-six interviews with former CDP workers, past and present community activists, residents and policy-makers, and have also drawn on three interviews in 1987/1988 by Patrick Candon; four interviews from 2010 and 2013 by Susan Hyatt; and a workshop held in North Shields in 2016 ([Armstrong et al., 2016](#)).

## Setting up the CDP

The project, initially the County Borough of Tyneside CDP, then North Tyneside CDP after boundaries changed in 1974, was located in North Shields, an industrial town on the north bank of the estuary of the River Tyne in North East England. Based principally around fishing and

ship-building, the town grew rapidly in the nineteenth century, with ship repair at Smith's Dock being the largest employer from the 1890s to 1960s. However, accelerating deindustrialization resulted in job losses in mining and fishing of around seventy per cent between 1950 and 1960 (Byrne, 1989, p. 53). Manufacturing and service sector employment increased, with jobs mainly filled by women (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b, p. 18).

The population of the area chosen for the CDP was 15,950 in 1971, predominantly white, working class, with only 0.9 per cent born outside the UK (Robinson and Townsend, 2016). It included an old working-class riverside district with port-related activities (South and North Trinity), two older village communities (Percy Main and East Howdon), and a 1930s council estate (North and South Meadow Well), along with nearby Hunters Close and Murrays Close (see Figure 1). Before selecting the area, the Home Office analysed 1966 Census data for the Borough, focusing particularly on social indices such as the proportion of children under five and adults over sixty-five, household amenities, income levels, and health and employment statistics (Corkey, 1975, p. 48). This led to the initial choice of Percy, Trinity, and Linskill wards, but the local authority convinced the Home Office to include the Meadow Well estate as 'the real problem area' (*ibid*). Linskill was omitted because much of the housing had been cleared. Other neighbourhoods were included because they suffered from poor



**Figure 1** The location of North Tyneside CDP (© Durham University)

housing conditions, high unemployment, etc. According to the CDP team, this choice was underpinned by a social pathology perspective:

At the beginning of the Project some Councillors, many officials and the Home Office Civil Servants believed that most of the problems of these areas were caused, in the main, by the attitudes and lifestyles of the people living in them (North Tyneside CDP, 1975, p. 2).

When the project started, the local authority (Tynemouth) was in Conservative control. One of the former CDP workers felt that having a CDP in a Conservative borough might have been a factor in its selection (Armstrong *et al.*, 2016, p. 7).

David Corkey, formerly a community development worker in Northern Ireland, was appointed as Director of the action team. He felt this was due to his experience in Northern Ireland and, compared with some other candidates, 'my Ulster accent would be a better fit with the Meadow Well' (David Corkey Interview, 2013). David Byrne, a former lecturer in social policy, was appointed as Research Director, with Penny Remfry and John Foster as senior community workers (later Assistant Directors) in the action team. According to David Corkey, John Foster was appointed because he was local, had been a community centre manager and was an active socialist, a member of Workers' Fight (a Trotskyist organization that had split from the International Socialists). Penny Remfry had worked in community development in different places, describing her perspective as similar to John Foster's, characterizing this as 'more revolutionary politics as were around in the early seventies' (Penny Remfry Interview, 1987). About twenty people were employed at different times over the five years of the project. The action team was in place by February 1973, with a budget administered by the County Borough of Tynemouth, and the research



**Figure 2** The CDP team c. 1975 (photo courtesy of Bob Davis)

team by Autumn 1973, administered by the Department of Behavioural Studies, Newcastle Polytechnic (Figure 2).

### *The approach of North Tyneside CDP*

North Tyneside was one of five CDP projects categorized as radical by Kraushaar (1982, p. 62) (see Banks and Carpenter, 2017, this Issue). Although all twelve CDPs accepted a structural analysis of problems in their areas as caused by external social and economic processes, the five 'radical' CDPs opted for a 'structuralist conflict' model of social change (see Community Development Project Working Group, 1974, pp. 170–172; Green, 1992, pp. 167–168). However, in contrast to other radical CDPs, North Tyneside refined their approach as *radical reformism*. As outlined in a final report (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c, p. 10), radical reformism is a class model of society, differing from a revolutionary perspective in that it 'is a process that involves fairly substantial change in one aspect of society but in the end does not challenge the fundamental basis of society'.

When asked in 2015 to explain their thinking on radical reformism, David Byrne (former Research Director) and Bob Davis (former Research Fellow) commented:

I think we came up with the phrase because some of us – myself and John Foster in particular – were Marxists with quite a lot of knowledge of debates in Marxist thought about reform versus revolution ... So the idea was all part of an intellectual current, which was trying to see how social transformation could be achieved by democratic means in developed societies. We felt that this sort of change was necessary to cope with the issues confronting working class people in places like North Shields ... Frankly John Foster and myself, as I remember, thought that a lot of the other CDP Marxism was not so much superficial as not particularly informed ... As I recall other CDPs quite liked the expression, but were more focused on analytical and descriptive work and less on action. (David Byrne, personal communication, October 2015)

I think it was in some ways a kind of rationalization of our somewhat ambiguous position of being employed by the state and yet not wanting to work *for* it, without being altogether directly oppositional. In addition, not everybody in the project was of exactly the same mind-set – and here 'radical reformism' perhaps represented a position which most could go along with. On a practical level, I think this manifested itself in the decision by quite a lot of us, after internal discussions, to join and engage ourselves in our local Labour Parties, regarding Labour as still (despite its many deficiencies) a mass working class party. (Bob Davis, personal communication, May 2016)

While ‘radical reformism’ is probably an accurate description of the project’s ideological position and certainly informed its strategy, it was not necessarily at the forefront of day to day work:

In practice, as a group we agreed in broad terms what we wanted to do. We listened to people on the estate. We wanted to get people involved in the local Labour party – that was where the power was. We worked with what we had. We saw that the ... housing was in a terrible state, people were overworked and underpaid and it was wrong. In our discussions there were differences but we did agree what our approach should be to support people and to challenge, and this is what we did. (Penny Remfry, personal communication, May 2016)

In October 1973, the project summarized their approach in a report to the Home Secretary:

We see our objective as being to initiate processes which will begin to remove social and economic inequality in the following ways:

- (i) By the re-asserting of political consciousness at the local level.
- (ii) By increasing the capacity of the deprived to insist on an equitable distribution in the provision of:
  - (a) Employment
  - (b) Adequate housing
  - (c) Health, education, welfare and legal benefits and facilities
  - (d) Information, etc.
- (iii) By influencing the policy and performance of government and non-government agencies at the local, regional and national level. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c, p. 12)

Before action-research began in earnest, team meetings clarified that the CDP was concerned with ‘politicization, not therapy’ and:

... the organisations developed by the project would have to have as their primary focus, issues relevant to their class; that is, although they were neighbourhood or area-based, this would not be the main reason for their establishment and maintenance (*ibid*).

An important way of mobilizing politically was through ‘action groups’, with a final report dedicated to this approach (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d). However, the final report does not clearly define ‘group work’ or ‘action groups’, although both terms are used. A ‘brief diary’ of group work activity includes examples of tenants’ groups, and, early in the project, ‘kids forming their own group to plan the playgrounds’ (North Tyneside CDP, 1978d, p. 7). According to Bob Davis (Interview, 2013), they used the term ‘action groups’ to differentiate the groups the project was creating from other similar organizations (like tenants’ associations). It is noteworthy that the majority of the

people they worked with were women – most tenants, a lot of the claimants and parents (Penny Remfry, in [Armstrong et al., 2016](#), p. 6).

The aim of CDP action groups before 1974 was ‘making a gain’ such as speeding up demolition and rehousing. However, because of public spending cuts and the feeling that the local authority was ‘not as progressive in its dealings with the public as it might have been’, the emphasis ‘became much more openly political in nature’ ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978d](#), p. 6). From the end of 1974 groups were encouraged to join or work with the Labour Party and to fight spending cuts collectively. This attempt to politicize residents led to ‘increasing conflict over what North Tyneside Council regarded as being the “proper” work of the project and of what both the workers and those involved in the various groups saw as necessary’ ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978d](#), p. 6).

## **Organizing for change – mobilizing action groups on key issues**

The project did not immediately embark on group work. First, evidence was gathered about the CDP area through surveys and historical research, including analysis of census data. A *Community Profile* ([North Tyneside CDP, 1973](#)) provided a picture of the CDP area (e.g. population, employment sectors, local services, organizations and facilities), and community attitudes to participation and change. In the final summary and evaluation North Tyneside aligned itself with other ‘radical’ CDPs in openly challenging the official Home Office assumptions of 1970. Clearly influenced by first-wave CDPs like Coventry, the project argued that although there may well be ‘unmobilized or untapped welfare and self-help resources in communities’:

It is becoming clear ... that the source of these problems lies outside, and out of control of these communities, and merely to raise the level of community organization and articulation in these areas cannot change the underlying structure of relationships between such areas and the political and economic institutions that affect them. ([North Tyneside CDP, 1973](#), p. 32)

Second, like most other CDPs, North Tyneside gathered local information and offered advice through ‘information shops’ the aim being ‘to maintain a presence in the project area, provide advice, information and referrals as well as gathering local opinions and needs around which to form action groups’ ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978c](#), p. 21). In a final report, it was noted that information shops were:

not revolutionary ... Indeed, the emphasis on “Information and Opinion” and the use of the word “advice”, reflects the main-stream community



work origins of the idea at this stage. There was a distinct whiff of participation in it all ... (North Tyneside CDP, 1978c, p. 20; see also wider critique by [Streatfield, 1980](#))

However, according to David Corkey (Interview, 2016), information shops were part of a clearly thought-through strategy. Lynne Caffrey, who ran the information shop on the Meadow Well estate, recalled the issues and main participants at the time:

We did a lot of work with local groups of people. We did work around housing ... welfare benefits issues ... unemployment. There was always a hard-core with local people who were interested and involved in things, and some of those people are still around, they're still there. (Lynne Caffrey, Interview, 2013)

According to [North Tyneside CDP \(1978d, p. 6\)](#) once an issue was identified, a plan of action was developed:

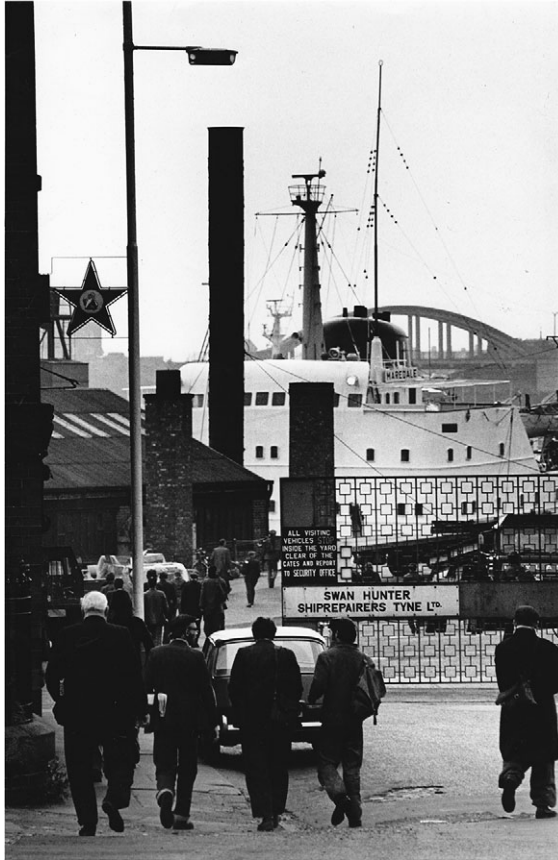
- initiating debate about the issue, including leaflets, internal discussions, informal meetings;
- forming an interest group;
- commencing action through surveys and analysis;
- calling a public meeting to clarify the issues, form an action group and establish a mandate for further action;
- organizing and carrying out a campaign to achieve the aims of the group via petition, report, councillor lobbying, etc. and in some cases by open conflict with the authority; and
- developing other issues – stemming from main problems or others not directly related, including joint action with other groups.

In discussing participation and CDPs, [Smith \*et al.\* \(1977, p. 246\)](#) argue that because the national CDP was an 'action project', it was concerned with what 'might be', not merely with 'what is'. As projects turned away from the notion of 'self-help', there was an 'attempt to develop a form of participation that would bring about a shift in balance of power'.

We now show how the CDP mobilized action groups and campaigns to promote change and shift the balance of power in relation to four issues: industry and employment; housing; play and recreation; and women's issues.

### *Industry and employment*

Industry and employment was a significant issue for North Tyneside CDP (see [Moor, 1974](#); [National CDP inter-project reports, 1975, 1977a](#); [North Tyneside CDP/North Tyneside Trades Council, 1975, 1977](#); [North Tyneside and Benwell CDP/Tyne Conference of Shop Stewards, 1977](#); [North Tyneside CDP, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c, 1978f](#)). The CDP team



**Figure 3** The early morning shift makes its way to work at Swan Hunter's ship repair yard in North Shields, 1976 (© Ken Grint)

investigated in detail the historical development of industry and employment (Figure 3), the process of deindustrialization, associated loss of traditional industries and effects of long-term unemployment. They also identified where power lay and how decisions affected local workers. The aim was:

... to do everything we could, as a project, to assist in the fight to achieve full and stable employment for the local workforce, at wages which were (at least) the national average. The way we saw ourselves doing that was to work with local groups and agencies – not necessarily restricted to the labour movement – providing them with information and also facilities with which to wage that fight. (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b, p. 160)

Alongside this research, they also initiated action in the fields of industry, employment and trade unionism, collaborating with trade unions and

other labour movement organizations (see [North Tyneside CDP, 1978b](#), pp. 155–183). Reflecting four decades later, Bob Davis explained how their work influenced local and national agendas, particularly during the early days of the 1974–1979 Labour Government when Tony Benn was Secretary of State for Industry:

The team chose to work with representative organizations like the North Tyneside Trades Council – the local arm of the TUC – providing support and information and publishing local reports with them, e.g. on youth unemployment. The CDP team also worked closely with a group of Tyneside shop stewards – the Tyne Conference of Shop Stewards – drawn mainly from the large engineering companies including Swan Hunters and Smith’s Dock in North Tyneside and Vickers in West Newcastle, within the Benwell CDP area. This was created to support and further, by the involvement of the shop stewards movement, the Labour Government’s 1974 Industry White Paper with its aims of greater state intervention in industry including shipbuilding. (Bob Davis, in [Armstrong et al., 2016](#), p. 5)

When Prime Minister Harold Wilson sacked Tony Benn, ‘the impetus of the campaign waned’. However, Bob Davis’s work continued with the Tyne Conference of Shop Stewards, including extensive research on the ownership and control of local industry – uncovering multi-national companies in the Tyne and Wear economy (the first signs of globalization) and resulting in the joint [North Tyneside/Benwell CDP/TCSS \(1977\)](#) publication, *Multinationals in Tyne and Wear*.

### *Housing*

Housing became the focus of several significant campaigns. In the CDP area, nineteen per cent of houses were without a bathroom, inside toilet and hot water; 2,600 pre-war council houses were awaiting modernization under the 1969 Housing Act; 1400 houses remained unimproved in the General Improvement Areas; and 500 households (in Compulsory Purchase Order Areas) were waiting to be rehoused ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978c](#), p. 47). The CDP team initiated the North Tyneside Housing Campaign in November 1975, generating political debate on housing and highlighting local authority faults in housing and planning policies and the implications of public spending cuts ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978c](#), p. 48). As Bob Davis commented:

The notable challenge was the housing campaign, which did, I suppose, set out to expose the council. I mean that really turned into quite a cause célèbre. (Bob Davis, Interview, 2014)

The campaign included community theatre, a series of short research pieces, a newsletter called *Housing Action News*, a sit-in at a rent office, demonstrations at Council meetings and a Housing Conference in November 1975. Considerable media attention was generated and the CDP was threatened with closure for challenging the Labour local authority's housing policy. For example, the research pieces criticized the Senior Planning Officer's plan (the 'Holdsworth Plan') which 'rankled with the leadership of the Labour Party' (David Corkey, Interviews, 1987; 2016). The plan was to demolish the remaining private tenanted housing on the banks of the Tyne, from Dockwray Square to Borough Road and beyond, dispersing residents to suburban estates (such as Battle Hill, Killingworth), bringing in private owner-occupied, high-income families.

Holdsworth, in his report, quoted grand vistas and luxury flatted accommodation, high-end apartments. All of this to service and support the shopping centre development. And we exposed this as a method of dispersing the working-class population of Shields, and of creating capital out of Shields. (David Corkey, Interview, 1987)

The first issue of the newsletter attacked the Labour Party's housing policies and the council's slum clearance record, and was banned by the local authority. As [Candon \(2014, p. 50\)](#) argues, 'there was a real concern that North Shields CDP was becoming overtly political' and the action techniques 'caused much embarrassment for the ruling Labour group and resulted in a good deal of hostility'.

Nevertheless, the Housing Conference went ahead and from this a resolution was accepted and a Housing Campaign Committee established of tenants, Labour Party members and trade unionists, the results of which are summarized in *North Shields: Organising for Change in a Working Class Area* ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978c](#), pp. 50–58):

In the end then, the North Tyneside Campaign failed to do more than raise the dust of housing discontent in the area, serving to demonstrate that while the cuts were being made and that the problems existed, it would take more than a few dents in the side of the Labour movement establishment to do anything about them. (*op. cit.*, p. 58)

Even though the report viewed the Housing Campaign as a 'failure' because the national financial crisis of 1976 led to public spending cuts, a former CDP worker interviewed later asserted some achievements:

I think one of the big achievements of the project was to stop that plan [Holdsworth] in its tracks. Because once we had exposed it, and once we started to argue in the Labour Party, that the working-class of Shields are being dispersed in the interests of these capitalist developments and it should stop, the Labour Group on the Council began to think about its

housing problems in Shields. Now, I think that was a big contribution of the Community Development Project to the social history of North Shields. (David Corkey, Interview, 1987)

### *Play and recreation*

Many CDPs supported the development of services for young people, including nursery and pre-school provision, adventure playgrounds and play schemes ([Community Development Project Working Group, 1974](#), p. 179). However, in North Tyneside, during the first three years, 'more funds were dedicated to this area than other areas of work' ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978c](#), p. 37). This was, first, because the *Community Profile* highlighted the lack of recreational facilities for young people (with only one youth club on the Meadow Well estate) as a close second to dissatisfaction with housing; second, Kenny Bell, the play organizer, was committed to the Adventure Playground movement (see [Sorensen, 1951](#); [Chilton, 2013](#)), having worked previously with Coventry CDP:

I was a student in Coventry, hating what I was doing. I happened to be walking down a back street one day and there was a piece of waste ground and there was this music playing and there was this guy building something, just knocking wood around. So I stopped and talked to him and he'd just been appointed to build an adventure playground and he'd been employed by the Coventry Community Development Project. So I then spent more time working on the adventure playground with him than I did studying. When I eventually finished as a student I worked on the playground full-time and that was linked to CDP, and then a job came up in North Shields as a play organizer, so I applied for that. (Kenny Bell, Interview, 2010)

However, disagreements arose between CDP play workers and statutory youth workers at the youth club over the CDP approach, which involved young people in the design and building of a playground. Tensions increased when a false report by the statutory youth workers – that young people had burnt down the playground – was reported to the media. In response, the CDP play workers 'worked with the young people to arrange a press conference to correct the initial reports and put across their own version of events' (Joe Caffrey, personal communication, 2017).

The conflict with statutory youth workers brought to a head growing disagreement within the CDP team about play. While all agreed that the CDP's role should be to demonstrate need and pressurize the local authority to fulfil their responsibility, not everyone valued work with young people per se, to develop skills, group consciousness, self-confidence, solidarity and cooperation ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978c](#)). There were

tensions between residents who identified play and recreation as a need and some CDP team members who thought 'it was not an area where you could politicise people and therefore it became secondary' (Penny Remfry Interview, 1987).

### *Women's issues*

One of the common criticisms of CDPs is the failure to tackle gender inequality and the 'paucity of attention given to the role of women in community initiatives' (Popple, 2011, p. 162; see also Green and Chapman, 1992). While many CDPs worked with women, North Tyneside was distinctive in producing a final report on *Women's Work* (Figure 4). A few women CDP workers drove the issue forward, inspired by the women's movement:

I'd spent the previous four years in North America and I'd been involved in the women's movement over there, came up here and actively looked for feminist groups of which there was one, at the time. (Penny Remfry, Interview, 1987)

The late 1960s to mid-1970s was the 'organizing stage' of the women's movement (Ryan, 1992) and some women CDP workers were actively involved in mobilizing women to create commitment (Gamson, 1975). This fitted with the CDP's politicizing objective, which was initially pursued through industry and employment work with the Trades Council, particularly the Working Women's Charter, drawn up by trade unionists and activists in the Women's Liberation Front and launched in 1974 (Saner, 2014). The Charter aimed to 'raise demands affecting women both as housewives and paid workers' (North Tyneside CDP, 1978b, p. 164). There were ten demands including equal pay, equal employment opportunities, maternity



**Figure 4** Women at work in the Levi Strauss clothing factory, 1976 (© Ken Grint)

leave, free contraception, free and flexible childcare and more women in positions of power and public life (see [North Tyneside CDP, 1978b](#), p. 164; [Saner, 2014](#)). Two women CDP workers were invited to work with the Trades Council to organize the campaign. However, it soon became apparent that such support was limited in that ‘the two women found themselves carrying the burden of the work’ ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978b](#), p. 164).

The initiative failed because the Trades Council officially supported the TUC Charter ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978b](#)). However, the Working Women’s Charter continued to function independently and became ‘more firmly based in community issues’ with ‘much of its energy taken up with propaganda, press releases and the production of *Shieldswoman*, its own bulletin’ ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978b](#), p. 165). This reveals the difficulties faced by those trying to improve working conditions for women within the male-dominated trade union movement. The central emphasis on class analysis in the CDP team made it difficult for women members to raise gender issues at either theoretical or practical levels. As [Remfry \(1979, p. 188\)](#) recalls: ‘we always talked about the people we worked with as “tenants” but this actually obscured an important reality – that they were not only tenants but also for the most part women’. Furthermore, most senior CDP workers in North Tyneside and elsewhere were men and although the problem of male dominance was discussed, as Penny Remfry (*ibid*) comments: ‘there were areas of our neighbourhood work which I and other women in the project were unhappy about but we were never able to articulate our reasons why’. For example:

there was the quite common occurrence of women dropping out of groups because of pressure from their husbands – sometimes physical pressure as well as verbal. As a project we never saw this as a problem to be dealt with – it was something that happened. (*ibid*)

The sidelining of gender and women’s issues meant that some women members ‘were doing it in our spare time off our own backs’ (Penny Remfry, Interview, 2015). This commitment created space for local women to talk, and led to a Final Report – *Women’s Work*, ‘which started out as a relatively simple explanation of the work that women do in North Shields’ and ‘turned into a socialist-feminist analysis of the oppression of women in general’ ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978e](#), p. 5).

So far, we have discussed what North Tyneside CDP did during its five-year life, combining research (including surveys, statistics and historical, and policy document analysis), action groups and campaigns on issues of importance to people in the CDP area. The next section explores the legacies left behind.



## Legacies and enduring effects

Having profiled some of the chief activities of North Tyneside CDP, and their immediate impact in mounting campaigns, politicizing residents, and challenging local and central government, we now consider the legacies it bequeathed and whether any have endured to today. We draw on interviews with past and current residents, practitioners and policy-makers, and community development and urban policy literature. 'Legacies' include materials, ideas, organizational structures, and networks. These may change over time, and it is sometimes hard to attribute their origins. We identified four types of legacies relevant to North Tyneside, which may also apply to other CDPs.

### *The CDP literature*

North Tyneside CDP produced six final reports, while several team members contributed to influential National CDP inter-project reports, including *The Costs of Industrial Change* and *Gilding the Ghetto* (NCDP, 1977a, 1977b) and book chapters and articles (e.g. Corkey, 1975; Foster, 1975; Corkey and Craig, 1978; Davis and Green, 1979; Remfry, 1979). The general view amongst those we interviewed was that CDP reports were the most tangible and influential legacy, widely read at the time and still used in teaching, particularly on community, youth and social work courses.<sup>1</sup> CDPs are frequently referenced in current literature on community development, for example key CDP reports are listed in the appendix of a recent widely used textbook (Poppo, 2015). As well as being a significant contribution to the history of community development, they can be reinterpreted by each generation. This was exemplified in our research when younger participants and those initially unaware of the CDP reflected on the persistence of inequality in their areas and the limited effects of interventions by government and community organizations from the 1970s to the present day.

As Kraushaar (1982) notes, North Tyneside CDP was particularly good at documenting its experiences. According to David Byrne (Interview, 2013):

I think we did more evaluating than Benwell. Benwell did some very good ground-breaking research, especially *The Making of a Ruling Class* which is a classic, but they did less evaluating.

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<sup>1</sup> Some reports can be purchased from St James' Heritage & Environment Group (<http://stjameschurchnewcastle.wordpress.com>) and some are available online, accessed at: <http://ulib.iupui.edu/collections/CDP> (27 October 16).



### *Organizational structures*

North Tyneside CDP left behind organizational structures that were significant regionally and locally over the following decades, though names, location and functions changed over time. For example, in 1976, the *Trade Union Studies Information Unit (TUSIU)* was established as a joint initiative between North Tyneside and Benwell CDPs, aiming to improve trade union education across Tyneside, given the limited local capacity of individual trade unions. This appealed to North Tyneside and Benwell CDPs because it would provide a longer term basis for combining the work they had initiated on combining community politics and trade unionism, overcoming the latter's narrow employment focus ([North Tyneside CDP, 1978b](#)). A former TUSIU worker commented that:

... the model was to try and develop a research facility that was based on action, for the trade union movement – particularly groups of shop stewards who were faced with deindustrialization. (Keith Hodgson, Interview, 2014)

The two CDPs contributed grant aid for two years, after which TUSIU gained support and funding from regional Trade Unions, regional TUC and local authorities, surviving until 2014/2015. According to a [Newcastle TUC Annual Report \(2006\)](#) after local government financial support ended in 2001/2002 it was 'relatively dormant' until 2005, when it was revived as part of the Newcastle and Gateshead TUC Centre Against Unemployment. Over the years, according to a former worker, TUSIU:

...had a considerable national influence on shipbuilding strategy, with numerous reports for different trade unions, many of which were given serious consideration by the *Financial Times* and other media...TUSIU also demonstrated the value of worker education and was a significant factor in NUPE establishing regional education officers, which was piloted in the North and then extended to all regions and is still in place in UNISON today. This model was also adopted by other regional unions such as TGWU and the GMB. (Keith Hodgson, personal communication, 2016)

At a more local level, when the CDP ended, residents wanted the Information Shop to continue, but the local authority sacking of information shop workers led to a nine-week sit-in and other direct actions ([The Journal, 1977](#); [Community Action, 1978](#)). Local residents used the organizing skills they had developed through the CDP successfully to fight closure, and the shop continued in the same location with a new name, the Community Rights Centre, providing 'a combination of welfare rights advice and community development' (David Peel, Interview, 2015). However, the building where it was located is now the Magpie Chippy

(Margaret Reynolds, Interview, 2014). While disputed, one source claims that the Community Rights Centre continued with a new name, the Meadow Well Resource Centre, later transferring to a new building and becoming Meadow Well Connected, which still exists. Another source claims that 'the Community Resource Centre (a relic of the North Shields CDP) and the Arts Centre combined forming the North Shields People's Centre, retaining its affiliation with the TUC and moving to new premises in North Shields' (Beaumont, 2000, p. 128). These different accounts show not just the vagaries of memory, but are testament to the way that people look at events and organizations from different perspectives and links and continuities may flow in several directions.

Despite these changes, both organizations left a legacy of radical community action and civic capacity. Margaret Reynolds, a former project worker with Cedarwood Trust who became a local Labour Councillor for Chirton Ward in North Shields, was a resident during the CDP era. She helped establish a credit union in the early 1980s, with inspiration from Joe Caffrey, a former CDP play worker who established the North East's first credit union in Scotswood. Margaret explained how she and others became involved locally and embarked on new career directions because of the CDP:

I'm not sure whether I would have ever got involved if it hadn't have been for them [CDP workers]. It was a combination of my circumstances and being involved and thinking, life would be a lot easier if we did get some help. We would make use of it. ... they helped engage with people in the community and people became volunteers ... Steve Wyers went to Durham University. Now I'm not sure that, without that project and that encouragement, that he would have taken those steps. So there's probably quite a few people who started their career one way or another through being involved, or seeing the work that was being done. (Margaret Reynolds, Interview, 2014)

### *Knowledge exchange and networks*

During the CDP period, knowledge exchange was important:

Actually to follow a chain of how an idea passes through different people and ends up as a concrete reality ... all the people involved in CDP in one way or another were important in generating ideas which got taken up by people ... in the council, as councillors, in the Labour Party, outside the Labour Party. (Penny Remfry, Interview, 1987)

Generating ideas, in some ways acting as a 'think tank', links to the politicizing objective. As Penny Remfry also said: 'the time was ripe – it was the 1970s – a time of ideas and ideologies and turning them into reality' (*ibid*).

Knowledge exchange was about influencing the collective, especially those with power.

The interviews also reveal how skills learnt while working with the CDP influenced subsequent work. David Corkey (Interview, 2016) was a North Tyneside Councillor from 1982 to 2015 for Chirton Ward. He wanted to represent the area because of his knowledge and experience:

I brought a depth of perspective into housing problems and welfare issues. I had an information base that few other councillors had, and a community base. I was heading up campaigns that made councillors a bit paranoid.

He also took the CDP model of working into the Citizens' Advice Bureau, developing its work beyond individual casework:

I've consciously had the model of CDP in my mind as I've chaired North Shields CAB over the years, particularly in relation to the information strategy. (David Corkey, Interview, 1987)

According to Joe Caffrey (Interview, 2015):

The play movement was something very new, particularly to the late '60s and early '70s, and it was very much child and young people-centred. In terms of its philosophy it helped shape how I would work later on, in terms of community development work. It was Kenny Bell who helped and guided me. I was working with these kids one day and Kenny says, "Joe, let the kid do it", and I said, "They're a bit big for him." He says, "It doesn't matter, let him knock the nails in, that's how he learns".

John Foster (Interview, 1988) also described how personal connections had continued once the CDP ended:

We had this organization within CDP called Political Economy Collective (PEC), and Gary Craig [Benwell CDP] and myself and one or two others, continued PEC after the ending of CDP projects. Now that PEC, in a sense, has gone but there's an informal network that still exists because there are so many of us still around. It's .. an informal process of influence whereby these individuals who have worked together, who've understood each other, they've argued a lot over a long period of time, who were not part of the traditional career route for local government. But some of whom have now been in local government, like myself, quite a long time. And who are now in reasonably senior positions. Well, we can continue that passage of debate and it moves things on.

Many CDP workers stayed locally to live and work. Some went into academia, others into trade unionism, local government, community work and activism and one became a film maker. Ten years after the CDP ended, some were in positions of power locally and they had a significant impact on radicalizing local politics in the 1980s (Candon, 2014).

## Conclusion: considering the key lessons from North Tyneside CDP

The North Tyneside CDP team had no illusions that community development work combined with research could solve poverty in declining industrial areas. Their aim was to raise awareness amongst national and local politicians, civil servants and local authority officers, and community development workers and local residents that the causes of social problems lay outside these areas and could only be solved by radical social and economic policies. Yet while some CDP messages influenced subsequent programmes to tackle urban decline, combining community, social and economic development, the former CDP area remains the most 'deprived' part of the borough. In 2015, this area, now Chirton and Riverside wards, was designated by the local authority for priority action on employment, housing, education, and health ([North Tyneside Council Cabinet Report, 2015](#)). This is despite numerous regeneration programmes in the post CDP period, including the Urban Programme, City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget, Enterprise Zones, and Neighbourhood Management ([Robinson and Townsend, 2016](#)). The CDP metaphor of 'gilding the ghetto' is as apt today as it was in 1977, with North Shields, along with other former CDP areas, having been re-gilded several times ([Banks, 2011](#)). It is interesting that [Wacquant \(2007, p. 68\)](#) in discussing territorial stigmatization in the age of what he calls 'advanced marginality', names the Meadow Well (mistakenly identified as located in Newcastle rather than North Shields) as an example of a relegated urban neighbourhood in England.

In the final report on living with industrial change, [North Tyneside CDP \(1978b, p. 186\)](#) identified the *tension between local and wider work* as a key lesson learnt:

In hindsight, we ought to have better appreciated the strengths of our location – our community base. We had firm local contacts, we developed knowledge about the local workplace, most people who lived in the project area worked locally; we knew what was going on. Whilst our work at a wider level was necessary and of great importance, the constraints on us meant that we had to order our priorities in the way that we saw them at the time. With greater resources we could have developed the local work more and made the effort to link up our wider work in a more systematic way with it and vice versa. In this way, a strategy which on the one hand concentrated on the unemployed, the claimant, the badly organized, the women, in our local area – the least advanced sections of the working class, and those in most need of organization – could have been made to relate to fundamental issues that on the other hand better organized sections were fighting; and in this way could have made a big

step forward in the attempt to break down the division between “domestic” and “industrial” working-class issues.

Despite this critical self-appraisal, the project along with other CDPs, showed how linking community politics and class struggle (Corkey and Craig, 1978) could make a difference at the local level. While this did scare the local authority, which became wary of employing community development workers, we have shown how it left a continuing legacy of community organizing after the project ended.

What has emerged through the research interviews and work with community partners is that people take different lessons from the CDP, re-interpreting it in the light of their own experiences. We found the former CDP area of North Shields a very different place today physically, and in terms of challenges for community development, compared to the 1970s. Community organizations are struggling to survive as local authority cuts bite and individuals and families seek crisis help for indebtedness, benefit sanctions, and food and fuel poverty (Armstrong *et al.*, 2016, p. 12). One question raised at the start of *Imagine North East* project was: ‘Were the CDPs right in their structural analysis?’ We conclude that they were then, and still are. Some forty years on, in the context of neo-liberal politics and economic austerity, the scope for radical reformism seems even more constricted now than it was then.

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